The dating of Levrault's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* and its implication for bird nomenclature

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ABSTRACT: The publication history of Levrault's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* is not straightforward. Of the 61 volumes in the work, the first five were re-edited over ten years after their original publication, with a supplement, leading to confusion over the dating of certain taxa described in the first edition—particularly within the genus *Bucco*, which appears in volume 4. Volume 6, printed in early January 1806, was never made available to the public. Only a few subscribers received a copy, which can be considered an 'advance distribution of separates.' Additionally, the dates listed on the imprints are not always accurate. After consulting French bibliographic journals from the period and in accordance with Article 21.3 of the *Code* (ICZN, 1999), this work can be dated from 1804 to 1846. The following dates are proposed for the first edition for the purposes of zoological nomenclature: volumes 1 and 2: 22 September 1804; volume 3: 30 January 1805; volumes 4 and 5: 31 December 1805. The date for volume 6 (excluding the supplement) should be 31 December 1806. Dates for volumes 18 and 54 should be 30 April 1821 and 30 April 1828, respectively, and volume 61 should be dated 15 August 1846. Only valid bird names are addressed here. Bird names in synonymy and taxa from other taxonomic groups require separate re-evaluation.

KEYWORDS: Charles Henri Frédéric Dumont de Sainte-Croix, Anselm Gaëtan Desmarest, Achille Valenciennes, René-Primevère Lesson, 19th century, *Bucco pusillus*, *Bucco auratus*, *Bucco roseus*, *Bucco torquatus*, separates.

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 19th century, a number of dictionaries emerged, each striving to serve as a critical reference for scientists while also making natural history accessible to a broader audience and standardizing the scientific terminology of the time. Among these, Levrault's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* [...], *Suivi d'une biographie des plus célèbres naturalistes ... Par plusieurs professeurs du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle et des autres principales écoles de Paris*[1] (hereafter referred to as *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* or *Dictionnaire*), stands out as a comprehensive work comprising 61 volumes of text and 12 volumes of atlas (Zimmer, 1926: 706; Ronsil, 1949: 298 #1786). This ambitious project aimed to systematically cover various branches of natural science, ranging from chemistry and physics to agriculture, mineralogy, botany, and zoology, all contributed by multiple renowned scientists of the time. Within the field of zoology, the majority[2] of the bird accounts were authored by Charles Dumont (1758–1830), whose contributions are signed with his initials (Ch. D.).

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[1] Note that this last part reads *Par Plusieurs Professeurs du Jardin du Roi, et des principales Écoles de Paris* from 1816 onwards.

[2] Although not specified in the *Liste des Auteurs,* monographs dealing with the Parrots (volume 39, pages 1–137) and the Toucans (volume 55, pages 23–39) were by Anselm Gaëtan Desmarest (1784–1838), Achille Valenciennes (1794–1865) authored the Woodpeckers (volume 40, pages 167–181), and René-Primevère Lesson the Plovers (*Charadrius*) and Sunbirds (*Cinnyris*) in volume 50 (pages 2–41).

The *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* was published in two distinct phases. In the first phase, the first five volumes appeared between 1804 and 1806, according to their title pages. The imprints list 1804 for the first three volumes, 1805 for volume 4, and 1806 for volume 5 (but see below for the exact publication dates). The second phase saw the re-editing of these five volumes between 1816 and 1817, followed by the publication of the remaining 56 volumes. The final substantive volume of the *Dictionnaire* (volume 60) was released in 1830, while volume 61, despite the 1845 imprint, was not published until 15 August 1846 (Anonymous, 1846: 395–396 #3676).[3] In the re-edition of the first five volumes, apart from the title page, the *Liste des Auteurs*, the *Prospectus*, and the *Introduction*, the type-setting and pagination of the dictionary itself—i.e., the alphabetical entries—remained identical to the original edition. In a notice on the first leaf of each of the first five volumes of the second edition, the publisher Levrault stated that "the first five volumes of this work were published between 1804 and 1806 … The updates to these volumes are provided in supplements, which have been placed at the end of each relevant volume" (Figure 1). Unfortunately, Levrault did not specify the exact publication dates for each of these volumes. However, it is clear that the supplements were published separately from the main text: supplements of volumes 1 to 4 should be dated 1816, and supplement of volume 5, 1817. It is worth noting that volume 6 was printed early in 1806 but was not made publicly available at that time. Only a few subscribers received copies, and this is clarified in a notice from Levrault to the readers when this volume was finally published in 1817 (Figure 2). This detail is crucial for determining the correct dating of any names introduced in the text printed in 1806 (i.e., excluding the supplement, which should be dated 1817). As this distribution of volume 6 can be viewed as an "advance distribution of separates and preprints", it complies with Article 21.8.1 of the *Code* (ICZN, 2012). Therefore, while no specific month or day is given, in accordance with Articles 21.3.2 (ICZN, 1999) and 21.7 (ICZN, 2012) of the *Code*, the official publication date for volume 6 should be 31 December 1806 (a not-after date), with its supplement dated to 1817. A summary of these publication dates is provided in Table 1.

The cessation of the *Dictionnaire*'s publication after volume 5 was the consequence of intense competition among scholars with differing ideologies, a rivalry that began in the late 18th century and continued into the early 19th century. In particular, Charles-Nicolas-Sigisbert Sonnini de Manoncourt's *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle*, published in 24 volumes between 1802 and 1804 by Déterville, directly competed with the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles*. This work was heavily criticized by Georges Cuvier,[4] and its success ultimately led to the cessation of Leverault's dictionary after only five volumes (see the *Prospectus* written by Cuvier at the beginning of the re-edited volume 1, pages vii—viii) (Chappey, 2004: 39). The competition from Sonnini's *Nouveau Dictionnaire* significantly impacted Levrault's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles*, forcing its premature halt. The arrival of Frédéric Cuvier (Georges' brother) to oversee the publication was intended to prevent delays (as noted in Dujardin-Sailly, 1804: 36), but in vain.

The *Dictionnaire* was originally slated for updates beginning in 1840, with the publication of approximately ten volumes of supplements. However, this project was ultimately abandoned, and only the 48 pages of botanical supplements were included in volume 61.

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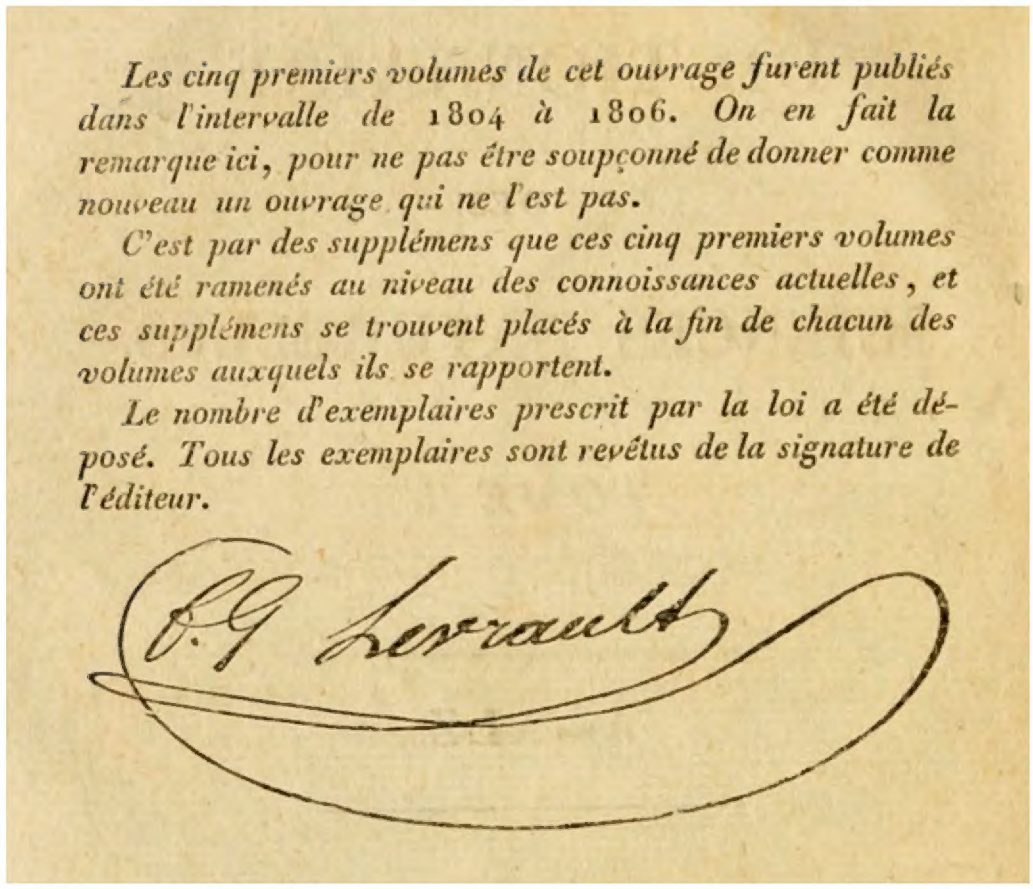
[3] This probably explains why the whole work is dated either from 1816–1830 (e.g. Ronsil, 1957: 43) or from 1816–1845 (e.g. Zimmer, 1926: 706).

[4] In his *Prospectus*, Georges Cuvier does not explicitly cite Sonnini's dictionary, but there is little doubt as to the work and authors he is targeting.

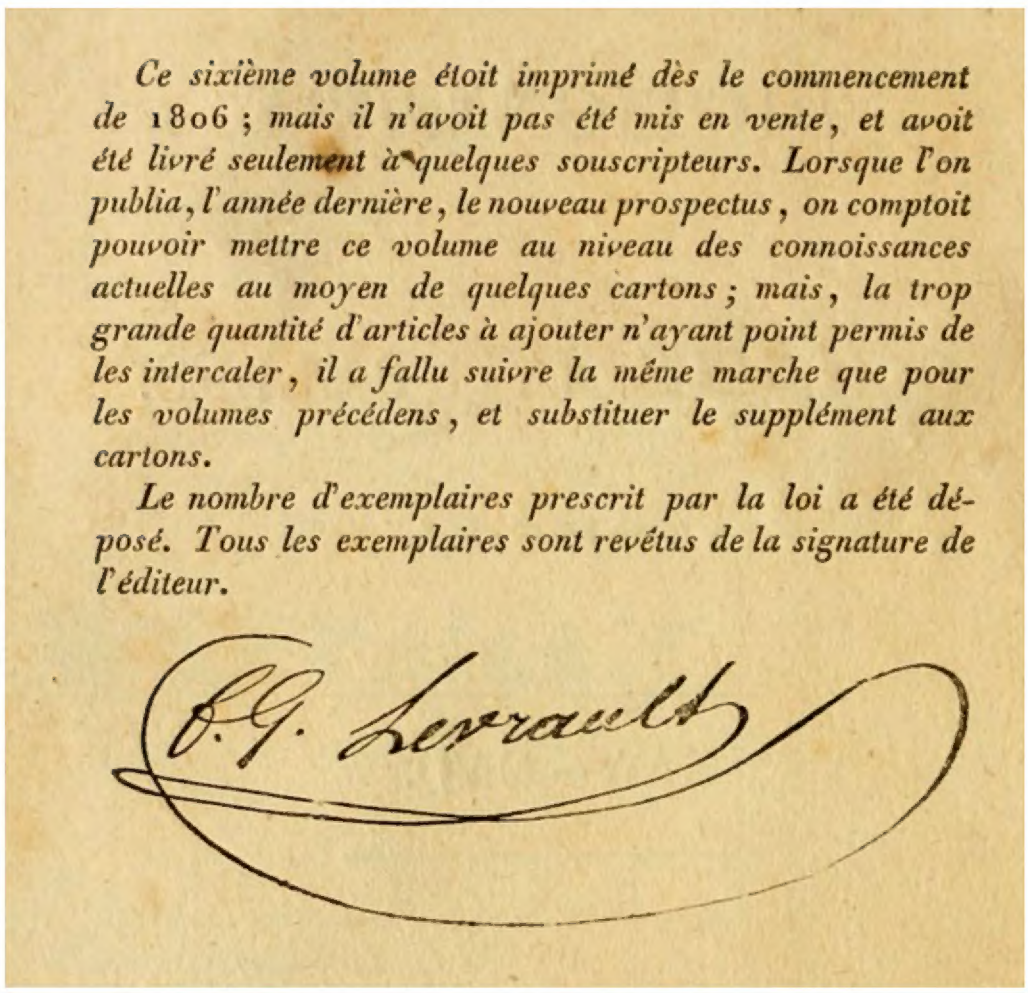


Les cinq premiers volumes de cet ouvrage furent publiés dans l'intervalle de 1804 à 1806. On en fait la remarque ici, pour ne pas être soupçonné de donner comme nouveau un ouvrage qui ne l'est pas.

C'est par des supplémens que ces cinq premiers volumes ont été ramenés au niveau des connoissances actuelles, et ces supplémens se trouvent placés à la fin de chacun des volumes auxquels ils se rapportent.

Le nombre d'exemplaires prescrit par la loi a été déposé. Tous les exemplaires sont revêtus de la signature de l'éditeur.

Figure 1. Notice that the publisher Levrault addressed to the readers of the *Dictionnaire* on the first leaf of each of the first five volumes of the second edition. This notice reads [translated from French]: "The first five volumes of this work were published between 1804 and 1806. This is noted here in order to avoid being suspected of presenting as new a work that is not. It is through supplements that these first five volumes have been brought up to the level of current knowledge, and these supplements are placed at the end of each of the volumes to which they relate. The number of copies required by law has been deposited. All copies are signed by the publisher."



Ce sixième volume étoit imprimé dès le commencement de 1806; mais il n'avoit pas été mis en vente, et avoit été livré seulement à quelques souscripteurs. Lorsque l'on publia, l'année dernière, le nouveau prospectus, on comptoit pouvoir mettre ce volume au niveau des connoissances actuelles au moyen de quelques cartons; mais, la trop grande quantité d'articles à ajouter n'ayant point permis de les intercaler, il a fallu suivre la même marche que pour les volumes précédens, et substituer le supplément aux cartons.

Le nombre d'exemplaires prescrit par la loi a été déposé. Tous les exemplaires sont revêtus de la signature de l'éditeur.

Figure 2. Notice that the publisher Levrault addressed to the readers of the *Dictionnaire* on the first leaf of volume 6 of the second edition. This notice reads [translated from French]: "This sixth volume was printed at the beginning of 1806; however, it had not been released for sale and had only been delivered to a few subscribers. When the new prospectus was published last year, it was hoped that this volume could be brought up to current knowledge through a few additional cancel leaves. However, the excessive number of articles to be added made it impossible to insert them into the existing work, so it was necessary to follow the same approach as for the previous volumes and replace the cancelled leaves with a supplement."

Additionally, the biographies, which had been announced since the first volume of the first edition, were not published until the final volume.

A few discrepancies in the chronology of the publication of the 61 volumes can be summarized as follows (see also Table 1): volume 18 was published after volume 19, in 1821 (not 1820, as indicated on the imprint); volume 23 appeared after volume 25; and volume 54

was released after volume 58. Notably, more than 300 pages of volume 54 are devoted to a single subject: *Théorie de la structure de l'écorce du globe*. This extensive account may help explain the delay in the publication of this volume.

The plates accompanying the text were published at irregular intervals, sometimes alongside the text and sometimes separately. Only the plates related to botany[5] include scientific names; all the others have vernacular names only.

The *Dictionnaire* includes several new taxon names. Only birds are dealt with here, taxa from other taxonomic groups should be the subject of further detailed studies, if they have not already been addressed.

The publication dates of the second edition of the first five volumes, as well as the subsequent volumes, have been well documented, particularly by Mathews & Iredale (1915) and Sherborn (1922: xlvi) through the entries in the *Bibliographie de la France*. The dates provided by these authors can be considered as "not-after dates." However, several decades earlier, Henri Cassini (1781–1832) had already outlined the publication dates, including the month and year (Cassini, 1834: 145–162).[6] Some of Cassini's dates differ slightly from those given by Mathews & Iredale (1915) and Sherborn (1922). As one of the authors of the *Dictionnaire* (for the botany accounts) for the supplements to the first six volumes and all subsequent volumes, I see no reason why we should dispute the dates provided by Cassini. Until proven otherwise, Cassini (1834) should be considered the authoritative source on this matter (see Table 1). Until this study, the dates for the first edition of the first five volumes remained unclear. Mathews & Iredale (1915) and Sherborn (1922) simply refer to the dates given in Levrault's notice (i.e., 1804–1806). Mlíkovský (2023) provides the dates as listed on the imprints of the title pages. Clements *et al.* (2023),[7] van der Mije *et al.* (2023), Mlíkovský (2023), *Avibase*,[8] Gill *et al.* (2024), *GBIF*,[9] and *Zoonomen*[10] date Volume 4 to 1805, while Peters (1948), Dickinson (2003), Dickinson & Remsen (2013), and del Hoyo & Collar (2014) date the same volume to 1816 (i.e. the second edition).

THE DATING OF THE FIRST EDITION OF VOLUMES 1 TO 5

The announcement for subscriptions to the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* and its scheduled publication for An XI [11] appeared on 28 May 1802 [12] (Roux 1802: 278). However, as we will discuss and as stated by Levrault, the first two volumes were not published until 1804. Several bibliographic journals from the period, notably the *Journal général de la littérature de France*, *Bibliographie de la France*, and the *Journal typographique et bibliographique*, provide key information on the publication dates of volumes 1 to 5 (first edition). The relevant evidence, in chronological order, is as follows:

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[5] i.e., according to the *Dictionnaire*, the *végétaux acotylédons* (which include fungi, sponges, lichens, mosses, diatoms etc.), the *végétaux dicotylédons*, and the *végétaux monocotylédons*.

[6] With the exception of the last volume (i.e. Vol. 61), which got published almost 15 years after Cassini's death.

[7] Except for *Bucco pusillus*, nowadays *Pogoniulus pusillus*, which the authors date from 1816.

[8] Accessed on 23/09/2024. Except for *Bucco pusillus*, nowadays *Pogoniulus pusillus*, which is dated 1816.

[9] Accessed on 11/11/2024.

[10] Accessed on 11/09/2024.

[11] *An XI* is the eleventh year of the French Republican calendar which, reverted to the Gregorian calendar, gives the period from 23 September 1802 to 23 September 1803.

[12] 8 Prairial, an 10, which is the date as it appears on the masthead.

- The *Journal général de la littérature de France* mentioned volumes 1 and 2 in its issue of Fructidor An XII [13] (Anonymous, 1804: 257–259), providing details on their contents, including, for instance, the accounts on *Abeilles* (volume 1) and *Arbres* (volume 2).
- The *Journal typographique et bibliographique* recorded the publication of volume 3 in its issue of 30 January 1805 [14] (Dujardin-Sailly, 1805: 197 #424), with details of its contents (e.g., on the account on *Arsenic*).
- The *Journal général de la littérature de France* mentioned volumes 4 and 5 in its eleventh issue of "1805 – [An] XIV" [15] (Anonymous, 1805: 322), providing details dealing, for example, with the accounts on *Blatte* (volume 4) and on *Buse* (volume 5).

In accordance with Article 21.3 of the *Code* (ICZN, 1999), the publication dates for the first edition of the first five volumes of the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* should be based on "the earliest day on which the work is demonstrated to be in existence as a published work." Therefore, the following dates are recommended: 22 September 1804 for volumes 1 and 2, 30 January 1805 for volume 3, and 31 December 1805 for volumes 4 and 5.

IMPLICATION FOR BIRD NOMENCLATURE

The nomenclature of several taxonomic bird groups has already been addressed: the genus *Charadrius* by Mathews (1913: 87), the genus *Cinnyris* by Stresemann (1914), and numerous taxa by Mathews & Iredale (1915).[16] Among the valid taxa (i.e., still in use today), those whose publication dates warrant attention—due to confusion between the two editions of the first five volumes—are those included in volume 4. All bird names introduced in this volume should be dated to 1805, rather than 1816 (see Table 1).

The publication of the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* spans from 1804 to 1846. This short note is intended to inform ornithologists—along with experts in other taxonomic fields—to the potential nomenclatural implications of the dating presented here, particularly to avoid confusion regarding the publication dates of the first five volumes and their re-edition, as well as the sixth volume, all of which contain supplements.

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[13] Which corresponds to the period from 19 August to 22 September 1804.

[14] *10 Pluviôse AN XIII*, as it appears in Dujardin-Sailly (1805).

[15] As indicated on the masthead and which corresponds to the period from 23 September to 31 December 1805 (i.e. the last day of the French Republican calendar before the restoration of the Gregorian calendar on 1 January 1806).

[16] Mathews & Iredale (1915: 20) stated their list '*may not include all the new names proposed in this work* [i.e., in the *Dictionnaire*]'. These authors also suggested that genera *Jacamerops* Dumont, 1822, and *Jacamaralcion* Dumont, 1822, which appeared in volume 24 (1822), should have priority over *Jacamerops* Lesson, 1831 [sic = 1830], and *Jacamaralcyon* Lesson, 1831 [sic = 1830]. See Dickinson (2011) for the date 1830.

Table 1. Dates of publication of the 61 volumes of the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Naturelles* (1804-1846), including the first edition of the five first volumes as well as volume 6. In bold, the publication dates that differ from the imprint dates.

Volume	Pages	Date from the imprint	Date from bibliographic sources	Reference	Valid bird names
1	i-lxxiii, 1-560 (1st ed.)	AN XII (1804)	Sep. 22, 1804	Anonymous (1804)	
	1-138 (Supplement)	1816	Oct. 31, 1816	Cassini (1834)	
2	1-515 (1st ed.)	AN XII (1804)	Sep. 22, 1804	Anonymous (1804)	
	1-123 (Supplement)	1816	Oct. 31, 1816	Cassini (1834)	
3	1-492 (1st ed.)	AN XII (1804)	**Jan. 30, 1805**	Dujardin-Sailly (1805)	
	1-174 (Supplement)	1816	Dec. 31, 1816	Cassini (1834)	
4	1-483 (1st ed.)	AN XIII (1805)	Dec. 31, 1805	Anonymous (1805)	*Bucco pusillus* Dumont; *Bucco auratus* Dumont; *Bucco roseus* Dumont; *Bucco torquatus* Dumont
	1-124 (Supplement)	1816	Dec. 31, 1816	Cassini (1834)	
5	1-480 (1st ed.)	AN XIV (1806)	**Dec. 31, 1805**	Anonymous (1805)	
	1-160 (Supplement)	1817	Mar. 31, 1817	Cassini (1834)	
6	1-531 (1st ed.)	[1806]	**Dec. 31, 1806**	**[Note 1]**	
	1-108 (Supplement)	1817	May. 31, 1817	Cassini (1834)	
7	1-534	1817	May. 31, 1817	Cassini (1834)	
8	1-603	1817	Aug. 31, 1817		
9	1-560	1817	Dec. 31, 1817		
10	1-596	1818	May. 31, 1818		
11	1-615	1818	Dec. 31, 1818		*Centropus javanensis* Dumont **[Note 2]**
12	1-564	1818	Dec. 31, 1818		
13	1-578	1819	Jul. 31, 1819		
14	1-558	1819	Aug. 31, 1819		
15	1-543	1819	Nov. 30, 1819		
16	1-567	1820	Apr. 30, 1820		*Falco leuphotes* Dumont
17	1-546	1820	Jul. 31, 1820		
18	1-594	1820	**Apr. 30, 1821**		
19	1-540	1821	Jan. 31, 1821		
20	1-572	1821	Jun. 30, 1821		
21	1-540	1821	Sep. 30, 1821		
22	1-570	1821	Dec. 31, 1821		
23	1-645	1822	Nov. 30, 1822		
24	1-533	1822	Aug. 31, 1822		
25	1-483	1822	Nov. 30, 1822		

Volume	Pages	Date from the imprint	Date from bibliographic sources	Reference	Valid bird names
26	1-555	1823	May. 31, 1823		
27	(1-4), 1-551	1823	Jun. 30, 1823		
28	(1-8), 1-492	1823	Sep. 30, 1823		*Phænicophaus superciliosus* Dumont
29	1-544	1823	Dec. 31, 1823		*Cossyphus caudatus* Dumont; *Cossyphus striatus* Dumont; *Megapodius reinwardt* Dumont
30	1-483	1824	May. 31, 1824		*Malurus textilis* Dumont
31	1-576	1824	Aug. 31, 1824		
32	1-567	1824	Nov. 30, 1824		
33	1-588	1824	Dec. 31, 1824		
34	1-560	1825	Apr. 30, 1825		
35	1-534	1825	Oct. 31, 1825		
36	1-560	1825	Oct. 31, 1825		
37	1-559	1825	Dec. 31, 1825		
38	1-528	1825	Dec. 31, 1825		
39	1-559	1826	Apr. 30, 1826		
40	1-492	1826	Jun. 30, 1826		*Picus erythrops* Valenciennes; *Lanius vittatus* Valenciennes; *Columba zoeæ* Desmarest; *Columba oceanica* Desmarest
41	(1-4), 1-558	1826	Jun. 30, 1826		
42	1-536	1826	Aug. 31, 1826		*Charadrius leschenaultii* Lesson; *Charadrius duvaucelii* Lesson
43	1-544	1826	Sep. 30, 1826		
44	1-526	1826	Dec. 31, 1826		
45	1-548	1827	Feb. 28, 1827		
46	1-546	1827	Apr. 30, 1827		
47	1-562	1827	May. 31, 1827		
48	1-572	1827	Jun. 30, 1827		
49	1-539	1827	Sep. 30, 1827		
50	1-554	1827	Nov. 30, 1827		
51	1-534	1827	Dec. 31, 1827		
52	1-570	1828	Mar. 31, 1828		
53	1-508	1828	May. 31, 1828		
54	1-22, 1-256, i-iii, 1-2, 1-3, 1-14, 1-3, 1-3, 1-4, 1-3, 1-2, 1-2, 1-4, 1-3, 1-2, 1-2, 1, 1-2, 1-4, 257-557	1829	**Apr. 30, 1828**		
55	1-566	1828	Aug. 31, 1828		

Volume	Pages	Date from the imprint	Date from bibliographic sources	Reference	Valid bird names
56	1-546	1828	Sep. 30, 1828		
57	1-628	1828	Dec. 31, 1828		
58	1-518	1829	Feb. 28, 1829		
59	1-520	1829	Jun. 30, 1829		
60	1-631	1830	Jun. 30, 1830		
61	I-VI, 1-48 (Supplement) 49-232 (Biographies)	1845	**Aug. 15, 1846**	Anonymous (1846)	

Note 1. As mentioned in the text, volume 6 had only been delivered to a few subscribers. To my knowledge, none of these copies exist today, hence the date given on the imprint is unknown. One can only rely on Levrault's notice (see Figure 2) which gives the year 1806.

Note 2. Some authorities gave the protononym *Cuculus javanensis* Dumont (e.g. Peters, 1940: 72; Payne, 2020). The correct protonym from Dumont is *Centropus javanensis*.

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